

Rep. Slaughter offers two amendments to the FY 06 Homeland Security Authorization Bill- May 18, 2005

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The first amendment would expand the popular NEXUS program.

Our tightening security along our vast northern border is one of the most important steps we have taken to defend our homeland since September 11. New security measures have had unintended consequences of stifling trade and tourism with our Canadian

Traffic congestion at the border continues to be a long-standing problem for local Canadian and New York residents who rely upon it for their business and personal lives. It is not uncommon for travelers at the peace bridge in buffalo to experience three to four-hour delays trying to cross the border. Beyond the local impact on our constituents, border-crossing delays cost the entire nation dearly.

According to a new report by the Ontario chamber of commerce, the u.s. economy absorbs 40% of the delay neighbors.

And that means that the U.S. losses are \$4.13 billion a year or \$471,000 an hour due to the border congestion. If action is not taken, we stand to lose 17,000 jobs by and 91,000 by 2030 . And we will want to alleviate that by expanding the preclearance programs like nexus, fast, and sentry.

These programs which are joint ventures between U.S.-Canadian-Mexican government are to help the border crossings. Right now the constituents along the border complain that registration is overly burdensome and complex, and it is.

It is unacceptable American citizens must travel to Canada to enroll in the nexus program. So to expand and make the clearance easier to navigate, my amendment would authorize the creation of at least four enrollment centers in the united states and would establish a customer phone service number as it stands now there is no phone to reach

nexus.

Finally, the amendment would create one consistent nexus card for land and air travelers. Nexus cards currently require a retinal scan while nexus land cards use fingerprints and we would merge these two and use one security feature for both air and land crossings.

Mr. speaker, this amendment has the support of the United States chamber of commerce and the border mayors in western New York. Because losing nearly half a million dollars an hour from border delays and the cost of preclearance upgrades would be ease -- would ease pay for themselves.

I'm grateful to the chairman of the committee and vice chairman of the committee and urge adoption of this amendment. And thank them for working with me on this amendment.

This amendment would require the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to submit a report to Congress on the agency's efforts to improve the design of its badges, uniforms, or other insignia.

Thank you, madam chair. My amendment would require the Secretary of Homeland Security to report to congress on the agency's efforts to reduce the replication of badges, uniforms, and other insignia. In addition, the secretary would be directed to report on the agency's efforts to increase public awareness of counterfeit badges and uniforms and to teach Americans to identify authentic identification of a DHS official. Two years ago, a man wearing an FBI jacket and carrying a badge attempted to rob the Xerox employee credit union in my district. The would-be robber killed one man and shot another and that murderer is still at large.

Last week, the Department of Homeland Security arrested a man in New York City who was in the possession of over 1,300 fake badges and insignia from over 35 law enforcement agencies along with two NYPD police uniforms. In addition, DHS agents found a lock nine-millimeter handgun, a berretta semiautomatic rifle, and a Winchester shotgun and used casings from a shoulder-fired missile. Now, I think everyone would agree that this man posed a legitimate threat to his community based on his weapons stash alone, and knowing that he had a gun and an FBI. Badge or a CPB badge or a police uniform makes me even more frightened to the trouble he might have caused.

The availability of counterfeit badges is an ongoing problem in this country and has gone unchecked for too long.

I'm disturbed that the identification and clothing of 1 public official is so easily reproduced. When I think about all the different efforts we've made and the technology we've employed to ensure someone cannot counterfeit a 20-dollar bill, I'm shocked that ensuring the intercity and -- integrity, and identity has not made more difficult. These people are given access to sensitive areas and sensitive information. And we trust that they are in fact, officers of that agency.

And we teach our children to trust people who wear official badges and uniforms. How terrifying is it to think about your lost child walking up to someone wearing a DHS. Uniform only to have that person really be a criminal?

This amendment is an important first step in vofplg -- improving the integrity of the DHS Badges. Next week, I will make an effort to protect the integrity of the public IDs one step further by introducing legislation that will expand the current federal criminal ban on fake police badges and the misuse of authentic badges to include uniforms, identification, and all other insignia of any kind officials, because we must be able to trust those who say they are public officials.

I appreciate very much being able to present this amendment and ask for its adoption. And I reserve the balance of my time.